

STATE OF MAINE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. 2001-608

November 30, 2001

VERIZON NEW ENGLAND INC. D/B/A  
VERIZON MAINE  
Request for Approval of  
Interconnection Agreement with  
Conversent Communications of Maine, LLC

ORDER APPROVING  
INTERCONNECTION  
AGREEMENT WITH  
CONVERSENT  
COMMUNICATIONS OF  
MAINE, LLC

WELCH, Chairman; NUGENT and DIAMOND, Commissioners

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In this Order, we approve interconnection agreements between Verizon New England Inc. d/b/a Verizon Maine (Verizon Maine) and Conversent Communications of Maine, LLC (Conversent), pursuant to section 252 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

On September 4, 2001, Verizon Maine filed negotiated interconnection agreements with Conversent, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 252, enacted by the Telecommunications Act of 1996. That section allows interconnection agreements that provide for interconnection between an incumbent local exchange carrier (ILEC) and another telecommunications carrier, including a competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC). It also allows a telecommunications carrier to purchase unbundled network elements or local services at a discounted wholesale rate (the discount reflecting avoided cost), or both, from an ILEC (or CLEC). Subsequently, Verizon Maine filed supplemental information to clarify its earlier filing.

The agreement incorporates terms and conditions of three separate interconnection agreements: (1) an interconnection agreement between the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company d/b/a Bell Atlantic-Maine and Mid-Maine Telplus, Inc., approved by the Commission on November 1, 1999 in Docket No. 99-730; (2) an interconnection agreement between New England Telephone and Telegraph Company d/b/a Bell Atlantic-Rhode Island and Cox Rhode Island Telecom II, L.L.C. d/b/a Cox Communications, approved the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission on March 7, 1999 in Docket No. 2614; and (3) Amendment 2 to an interconnection agreement between Verizon New England Inc. d/b/a Verizon Maine and FairPoint Communications Solutions Corp. approved by this Commission on January 17, 2001 in Docket No. 2000-1029. In its September 4, 2001 filing, Verizon Maine also requested approval of an agreement that supplements the adopted terms and conditions with respect to reciprocal compensation, and of an agreement pertaining to UNE Remand provisions.

Conversent will pay to Verizon Maine the interconnection prices contained in the voluntary agreements that were reached pursuant to arms-length negotiations between the

parties. The pricing standards contained in 47 U.S.C. § 252(d) apply only to arbitration proceedings under section 252(b) and not to negotiated agreements under section 252(a). Verizon Maine does not represent that the prices contained in the agreement are consistent with the section 252(d) pricing standards or with any other state or federal policy.

Section 252(e)(2) states that a state commission may reject a negotiated agreement only if it finds that "the agreement (or portion thereof) discriminates against a telecommunications carrier not a party to the agreement" or if "the implementation of such agreement or portion is not consistent with the public interest, convenience and necessity." We received no comments by the comment deadline set in a November 8, 2001 Notice of Agreement and Opportunity to Comment. We do not make either of the findings set for in section 252(e)(2) for rejection, and we therefore approve the agreement.

We qualify our approval in two respects, however, and reserve findings on future potential issues. First, we reserve judgment on whether the rates contained in the agreement are reasonable from the perspective of Verizon Maine's retail ratepayers. Verizon Maine is presently under an alternative form of regulation (AFOR) ordered by the Commission in Docket No. 94-123. The AFOR began in December, 1995. Under the AFOR, Verizon Maine bears the risk of lost revenues resulting from rates that are too low. In Docket No. 99-851, we have continued the AFOR until May 31, 2006. We do not resolve whether Verizon Maine is receiving reasonable compensation from any CLECs that may avail themselves of the rates provided to Conversent pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 252(i).

Second, section 271(c) of the Act, 47 U.S.C. § 271(c), requires that the Bell Operating Companies (BOCs) meet certain requirements before they are allowed to provide interLATA service (the so-called "competitive checklist"). Under section 271(d)(3), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) must determine whether the BOC has met the competitive checklist before granting the BOC authority to provide interLATA service within its region. Prior to making that determination, the FCC must consult with state commissions to verify the compliance of the BOC with the checklist. Our approval of this agreement should not be construed as a finding that Verizon Maine has met those requirements.

On September 29, 1999, in Docket No. 98-582, the Commission granted authority to NEVD of Maine to provide local exchange telecommunications services in Maine. On December 16, 1999, the Director of the Commission's Technical Analysis Division approved a name change from NEVD of Maine, LLC to Conversent Communications of Maine, LLC.

The agreement filed by Verizon Maine provides for interconnection between Conversent and Verizon Maine's network in Maine. If Conversent seeks to interconnect with networks maintained by other incumbent local exchange carriers in Maine, it must seek a termination, suspension, or modification of the exemption contained in 47 U.S.C. 251(f)(1)(A).

**ORDERING PARAGRAPHS**

Accordingly, we

1. Approve the Interconnection Agreements between Verizon New England Inc. d/b/a Verizon Maine and Conversent Communications of Maine, LLC, attached hereto, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 252(e); and

2. Order that the Administrative Director shall make a copy of the attached Agreements available for public inspection and copying pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 252(h) within 10 days of the date of this Order.

Dated at Augusta, Maine this 30<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2001.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

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Raymond Robichaud  
Acting Administrative Director

COMMISSIONERS VOTING FOR: Welch

Nugent  
Diamond

NOTICE OF RIGHTS TO REVIEW OR APPEAL

5 M.R.S.A. § 9061 requires the Public Utilities Commission to give each party to an adjudicatory proceeding written notice of the party's rights to review or appeal of its decision made at the conclusion of the adjudicatory proceeding. The methods of review or appeal of PUC decisions at the conclusion of an adjudicatory proceeding are as follows:

1. Reconsideration of the Commission's Order may be requested under Section 1004 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (65-407 C.M.R.110) within 20 days of the date of the Order by filing a petition with the Commission stating the grounds upon which reconsideration is sought.
2. Appeal of a final decision of the Commission may be taken to the Law Court by filing, within 30 days of the date of the Order, a Notice of Appeal with the Administrative Director of the Commission, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320(1)-(4) and the Maine Rules of Appellate Procedure.
3. Additional court review of constitutional issues or issues involving the justness or reasonableness of rates may be had by the filing of an appeal with the Law Court, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320(5).

Note: The attachment of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the particular document may be subject to review or appeal. Similarly, the failure of the Commission to attach a copy of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the document is not subject to review or appeal.